Early Care and Education for Children in Immigrant Families

Immigrant children make up a sizable portion of children under the age of six in the U.S. Nationally, they comprise about 24 percent of the under-six age group, and that figure climbs to 50 percent in California. The report explores current early childhood education trends for immigrant children and offers suggestions for how to improve early education opportunities for immigrant children.

According to the report, estimates show that young immigrant children were more likely than their native peers to be in parental care only, at 59 percent versus 44 percent. Additionally, immigrant children were less likely to be in center-based care, with 14 percent of immigrant children participating versus 25 percent.

Affordability, availability and access all present barriers to quality early childhood education programs for immigrant families. Language barriers and distrust of government programs may also discourage participation.

The authors suggest that policymakers first make preschool attendance universal as a way reach disadvantaged children in general and disadvantaged immigrant children in particular. Second, the authors suggest that language barriers and informational gaps be addressed by adjusting the way publicly subsidized programs are structured and marketed.

The report appears in the Spring 2011 volume of The Future of Children. The volume focuses on the well-being of immigrant children and reviews demographic trends, education trends, health status, social integration and participation in public programs like welfare.

The Future of Children is a partnership between the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and the Brookings Institution.

Read the Report.